A PROVISIONAL RANGE EXTENSION FOR *THECLINESTHES SULPITIUS* (MISKIN) (LEPIDOPTERA: LYCAENIDAE) IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

DANIEL KING

420 Spencer Road, Thornlie, WA 6108 (Email: drd_king@hotmail.com)

Abstract

Theclinesthes sulpitius (Miskin) is provisionally recorded from the North West Cape area of Western Australia.

Introduction

Theclinesthes sulpitius (Miskin, 1890), the Samphire Blue, has a varied distribution around Australia, with its range in Western Australia considered to extend as far south as Broome (M. Braby pers. comm.). There are no previous records of this butterfly from the North West Cape area, further south.

Discussion

A single specimen (Fig. 1) of a butterfly satisfying at least 3 of the 4 criteria proposed by Braby (2012) for identifying *T. sulpitius* was collected by the author on 10 February 2013. The site was along the track leading to the Oyster Stacks snorkelling area of Ningaloo Reef, within the Cape Range National Park (22.132S, 113.878E). The butterfly was locally common around various unidentified succulents growing beside the track.

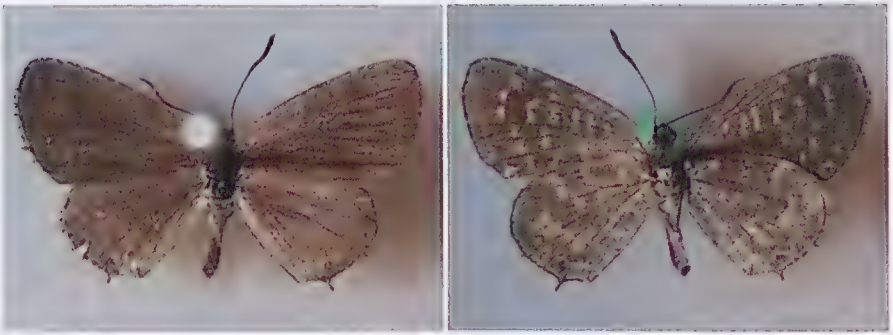

Fig. 1. *Theclinesthes sulpitius*: upper and undersides of female from Cape Range National Park, WA.

To distinguish *T. sulpitius* from *T. serpentata* (Herrich-Schäffer, 1869), Braby (2012) offered the following comments:

> 'Both species closely resemble each other and are difficult to separate, but the main points of difference concern three colour pattern characters and one ecological character: (1) upperside ground colour; (2) extent of tornal spots on hindwing; (3) extent of white patch on underside of hindwing; and (4) habitat and larval food plant specialisation. In *T. sulpitius*, the upperside ground colour is

brown with the blue area absent or restricted to the basal areas, whereas in *T. serpentatus* the blue area is extensive. The tornal spots on the hindwing in *T. sulpitius* are conspicuous, especially on the underside, whereas they are generally obscure in *T. serpentatus*. The white patch on the underside of the hindwing is usually present, but generally less extensive, in *T. sulpitius*, whereas it is always present and generally extensive in *T. serpentatus*.'

Braby (2000) provided a further criterion: in *T. sulpitius* there is an 'absence of a chequered scale-fringe'. Braby (2000) conceded, however, that 'some specimens of *T sulpitius* ... have the scale fringe present' and, in Braby (2004), this criterion is not mentioned as a defining characteristic.

The specimen collected satisfies the first three criteria and also lacks a chequered scale-fringe. (Note that it has hair-like extensions adjacent to the tornal spots on the hind wings). Whether the specimen satisfies Braby's fourth criterion is unknown, as the identity of the plants that were the focus of the butterflies is likewise unknown. A photographic image of the area obtained from the internet, however, shows plants similar to or the same as those around which the butterflies were flying; comparison of these plants with images of samphires is supportive of the idea that the plants where I caught my specimen are samphires. Nevertheless, M. Braby (pers. comm.) suggested that the collection of further specimens would be desirable and I present my finding so that other interested collectors may visit the site and obtain such specimens.

Acknowledgements

I thank the Western Australian Department of Environment and Conservation for granting Licence Number SF009032, enabling me to collect from Cape Range National Park. I also thank Michael Braby, Kelvyn Dunn, Andy Williams and Matt Williams for their comments with regard to the specimen discussed. Special thanks are due to Andy Williams for photographing the specimen.

References

BRABY, M.F. 2000. *Butterflies of Australia: their identification, biology and distribution.* CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood; xxvii + 976 pp.

BRABY, M.F. 2004. *The complete field guide to the butterflies of Australia.* CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood; x + 340 pp.

BRABY, M.F. 2012. The butterflies of El Questro Wilderness Park, with remarks on the taxonomy of the Kimberley fauna, Australia. *Records of the Western Australian Museum* **27**(2): 161-175.